

GARDAI BID TO REDUCE ROAD DEATH CARNAGE

Education key to road safety

FOREIGN nationals and European Union citizens have been invited to attend a safety roadshow in Cork this Friday — two weeks to the day after four Polish men were killed in a horrific accident in Ballinhassig.

A total of 15 people have been killed on Cork roads so far this year, in comparison to nine this time last year.

Because of shocking statistics like these, the Cork City Traffic Division is appealing to members of the public to attend the roadshow.

Organised by the Cork City Traffic Division, it will be the second road safety roadshow to take place in Cork secondary schools in recent weeks and, although it primarily targets Transition Year students, the public are also invited.

The first roadshow took place in Ashton School in Cork city last month and the next will take place in the North Monastery secondary school this Friday.

At the roadshow, members of the Cork City Traffic Division show video footage of car collisions and accidents, while allowing those present to study the road safety equipment gardai use on a daily basis, including the devices they use to study the speed of a car and the level of alcohol taken by a driver.

According to Inspector Pat Lehane, of the Cork City Traffic Division, the purpose of the roadshow is to make young people aware of the consequences of reckless driving, while also explaining the role of the gardai in road safety.

"We're targeting Transition Year students because we want to reach teenagers and young drivers on provisional licences who are the most vulnerable in Cork, especially males in the 18 to 25 age bracket," he said.

"This is an opportunity for people to interact with us and to see what can happen on the roads. We were all young once and wanted to sit behind the wheel but we can't put an old head on young shoulders so this is our way of showing them what can happen.

"We're hoping we can encourage compliance with our road traffic legislation and get them to buy into it at an early age," he said.



Members of Ballinora and Ballincollig Red Cross with members of the Ballincollig Fire Services simulate a rescue from a 'crash scene'. A safety roadshow takes place in Cork this Friday.

Picture: Brian Loughheed



OLGA CRONIN

Inspector Lehane said that while students who attended the last roadshow showed a great interest in learning more about road safety, there was a poor turn-out from the public.

"The last roadshow was very successful in that there was a lot of interest from the students and I believe there was some impact. But unfortunately there was a poor turn-out from the public," he said.

The decision to hold a road safety roadshow in schools nationwide was made following the tragic deaths last October of five young people in Buncrana, Donegal — a town which also saw four Latvians and one Lithuanian killed in February.

"The first roadshow took place in Donegal in January and then it was decided that two should be held in each garda traffic division across the country," said Inspector Lehane.

He also said that following the deaths of the five Polish men last week, the CCTD have made a concerted effort to invite members of the foreign national community to attend the roadshow.

However, Inspector Lehane also said that there is a cultural challenge ahead, and that the message needs to be communicated effectively to the foreign-national community.

"We have made contact with some foreign-national organisations and are hoping they will attend the meeting next week and we can get the message across to them," he said.

Getting through the foreign national community in Cork is increasingly difficult he said,

because they tend not to read local newspapers or listen to local radio.

There has to be an overall change in Irish motorists' attitude to driving if there is ever going to be a slow-down in the escalating death toll on our roads, he added.

"Speeding and drink driving are the two main issues that have to be tackled.

"Half of the accidents we come across would involve drink at some level."

In regards to road safety, Inspector Lehane said there were three Es involved — education, engineering and enforcement.

Meanwhile, the Cork City Traffic Division is set to get a 50% increase in manpower by the end of the year, with 14 additional personnel.

● *The public can attend the meeting in North Monastery secondary school from 7pm to 10pm on Friday, April 28.*



ROBERT O'SHEA

NEXT month several big US firms, in conjunction with the US State Department, will be giving their employees a "world citizen's guide" with 16 etiquette tips on how to improve their country's battered image abroad.

The Yanks' reputation has been so battered in recent years that many of their tourists have gone to the extreme length of pretending to be Canadians while abroad in Europe. Not that this tip is in the guide, but others that are include "listen at least as much as you talk"; "speak lower and slower"; and "your religion is your religion and not necessarily theirs".

So we can all look forward to some sensitive, if slightly embarrassed and apologetic American tourists this summer.

But this isn't the first time that travellers to Europe from the US have been given a guide on how to behave. Before US G.I.s arrived in Northern Ireland for World War II duty, they were each given a guide on how to behave. It begins:

We Americans don't worry about which side our grandfathers fought on in the Civil War, because it doesn't matter now. But these things still matter in Ireland and it is only sensible to be forewarned.

There are two excellent rules of conduct for the American abroad. They are good rules anywhere but they are particularly important in Ireland: 1. Don't argue religion. 2. Don't argue politics.

Fair enough so far. It goes on:

Before you have been there many days you will hear all about Ireland's long history, the beauty of Ireland's scenery, and the extraordinary goings-on of Irish fairyfolk...

You knew it was going to descend into Darby-O-Gill and the Little People before long, didn't you?

Now while I agree that the Americans need to have some manners slapped on them before they leave the Land of the Free, there should be a bit of give and take.

Recently a colleague was telling me how her boyfriend (an American) was always having "Go home, Yank" shouted at him when he was introduced to people. This was an obvious reference to some dialogue from John B. Keane's *The Field*. Obvious, that is, to everyone but him and for two years he thought it was festering anti-American sentiment rearing its ugly head.

To avoid such incidents in the future, maybe we should draw up some guidelines for ourselves. I have a few suggestions:

● Let's drop the Céad Míle

Fáilte for starters. This basically means that we are exaggerating how pleased we are to see you.

● And let's stop foisting tea on people for Christ's sake. Even doing it in a pretend Mrs Doyle voice doesn't make it ironic.

● When we have got into a round with a foreign man in a bar and it is his round, why don't we just point this out to him instead of staring at him aggressively.

● And when English people stop cars next to us and roll down the window, why don't we at least point them in the right direction once in a while.

● Let's stop batting down the peaks on the baseball caps of visiting Americans into their faces (or am I the only one who does this?)

● When a French person asks us if we speak any French and we say we did it for three years in secondary school, let's try not to have the only word we remember be "petit".

● Come on now, let's cop on and stop pretending we can speak Irish in front of foreigners. You know, when you're in the pub and they say: "So can you speak Gaelic?" and your mate starts going: "Tá cailín go deas" and you reply: "An will too caint orm agus ag nós na gaoithe ag dul go dtí an leithreas maw shay de chuaigh." and they ask what you said and you say: "He said you were beautiful and I agreed and said 'Your eyes shine brighter than the Blarney Stone'."

● When with Germans, don't mention: Fawty Towers, Jurgen Klinns-mann, the Eurovision or raise your right hand diagonally erect from your torso. Do whatever you want with your left hand.

● If you had the misfortune of an Australian you met on holidays coming to visit, simply explain that you thought you'd never see them again and give them the address of a hostel.

● The Spanish temperament is a kind and rather gullible one. Most people of Iberian stock will believe anything you tell them. Try it. They will be sceptical for a while, but if you keep insisting that, say, Moll's Gap was created by a tornado, they will eventually believe you. Tell them the truth eventually, though, because they are fine people.

Finally, remember that tourists can become lifelong friends if you treat them nicely and they might even invite you to come and stay with them. If they don't, tell them the little people will get them.